

TE

467

.L4W7

General Lee

By

General Viscount Wolseley

UC-NRLF



\$D 8 051

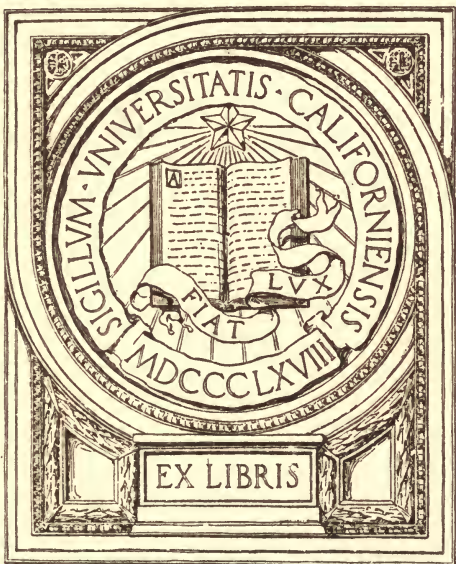
Thos. R. Bacon.

from

Knox Meddoy,

1908.

GIFT OF
THOMAS RUTHERFORD BACON
MEMORIAL LIBRARY



General Lee

By

GENERAL
VISCOUNT
WOLSELEY

Rochester
1906

7-5901
CSF

E 4.67
.LAW7

300 COPIES PRINTED
FOR
GEORGE P. HUMPHREY
ROCHESTER
N. Y.

Ms. 2. 5. 17
LAW 7

General Lee.*

THE history of the war between the Northern and Southern States of North America is yet to be written. General Long's work on the great Confederate general is a contribution towards the history of that grand but unsuccessful struggle by the Seceding States to shake off all political connection with the Union Government. It will be read with interest as coming from the pen of one who was Lee's military secretary, and its straightforward, soldier-like style will commend it to all readers.

It is not my intention to enter upon any narrative of the events

* "MEMOIRS OF ROBERT E. LEE: HIS MILITARY AND PERSONAL HISTORY." By General A. L. Long and General Marcus J. Wright. London, 1886.

General Lee.

which lead to that fratricidal war. The unprejudiced outsider will generally admit the sovereign right, both historical and legal, which each State possessed under the Constitution, to leave the Union when its people thought fit to do so. At the same time, of Englishmen who believe that "union is strength" and who are themselves determined that no dismemberment of their own empire shall be allowed, few will find fault with the men of the North for their manly determination, come what might, to resist every effort of their brothers in the South to break up the Union. It was but natural that all Americans should be proud of the empire which the military genius of General Washington had created, despite

General Lee.

the efforts of England to retain her colonies.

It is my wish to give a short outline of General Lee's life, and to describe him as I saw him in the autumn of 1862, when, at the head of proud and victorious troops he smiled at the notion of defeat by any army that could be sent against him. I desire to make known to the reader not only the renowned soldier, whom I believe to have been the greatest of his age, but to give some insight into the character of one whom I have always considered the most perfect man I ever met. Twenty-one years have passed since the great Secession War ended, but even still, angry remembrances of it prevent Americans from taking an impartial view of

General Lee.

the contest, and of those who were the leaders of it. Outsiders can best weigh and determine the merits of the chief actors on both sides, but if in this attempt to estimate General Lee's character, I offend any one by the outspoken expression of my opinions, I hope I may be forgiven. On one side I can see, in the dogged determination of the North, persevered in to the end through years of recurring failure, the spirit for which the men of Britain have always been remarkable. It is a virtue to which the United States owed its birth in the last century, and its preservation in 1861-5. It is the quality to which the Anglo-Saxon race is most indebted for its great position in the world. On the other hand, I can recognize

General Lee.

the chivalrous valour of those gallant men whom Lee led to victory: who fought not only for fatherland and in defense of home, but for those rights most prized by free men. Washington's stalwart soldiers were styled rebel by our King and his ministers, and in like manner the men who wore the gray uniform of the Southern Confederacy were denounced as rebels from the banks of the Potomac to the head waters of the St. Lawrence. Lee's soldiers, well versed as all Americans are in the history of their forefathers' struggle against King George the Third, and believing firmly in the justice of their cause, saw the same virtue in one rebellion that was to be found in the other. This was a point upon

General Lee.

which, during my stay in Virginia in 1862, I found every Southerner laid the greatest stress. It is a feeling that as yet has not been fully acknowledged on the Northern side.

“ Rebellion, foul dishonoring word,
Whose wrongful blight so oft has stained
The holiest cause that tongue or sword
Of mortal ever lost or gained.

How many a spirit born to bless
Hath sunk beneath thy withering name,
Whom but a day's, an hour's success,
Had wafted to eternal fame.”

As a looker-on, I feel that both parties in the war have so much to be proud of, that both can afford to hear what impartial Englishmen or foreigners have to say about it. Inflated and bubble reputations were acquired during its progress,

General Lee.

few of which will bear the test of time. The idol momentarily set up, often for political reasons, crumbles in time into the dust from which its limbs were perhaps originally moulded. To me, however, two figures stand out in that history towering above all others, both cast in hard metal that will be forever proof against the belittling efforts of all detractors. One, General Lee, the great soldier; the other, Mr. Lincoln, the far-seeing statesman of iron will, of unflinching determination. Each is a good representative of the genius that characterised his country. As I study the history of the Secession War, these seem to me the two men who influenced it most, and who will be recognized as its greatest heroes

General Lee.

when future generations of American historians record its stirring events with impartiality.

General Lee came from the class of landed gentry that has furnished England at all times with her most able and distinguished leaders. The first of his family who went to America was Richard Lee, who in 1641 became Colonial Secretary to the Governor of Virginia. The family settled in Westmoreland, one of the most lovely counties in that historic state, and members of it from time to time held high positions in the government. Several of the family distinguished themselves during the War of Independence, amongst whom was Henry, the father of General Robert Lee. He raised a mounted corps known

General Lee.

as "Lee's Legion," in command of which he obtained the reputation of being an able and gallant soldier. He was nicknamed "Light Horse Harry." He was three times governor of his native state. To him is attributed the authorship of the eulogy on General Washington, in which occurs the so often quoted sentence, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," praise that with equal truth might have been subsequently applied to his own distinguished son.

The subject of this slight sketch, Robert Edward Lee, was born January 9th, 1807, at the family place of Stratford, in the county of Westmoreland, state of Virginia. When only a few years old his parents

General Lee.

moved to the small town of Alexandria, which is on the right bank of the Potomac River, nearly opposite Washington, but a little below it.

He was a boy of eleven when his father died, leaving his family in straitened circumstances. Like many other great commanders, he was in consequence brought up in comparative poverty, a condition which has been pronounced by the greatest of them as the best training for soldiers. During his early years he attended a day-school near his home in Alexandria. He was thus able in his leisure hours to help his invalid mother in all her household concerns, and to afford her that watchful care which, owing to her very delicate health, she so much needed. She was a clever,

General Lee.

highly-gifted woman, and by her fond care his character was formed and stamped with honest truthfulness. By her he was taught never to forget that he was well-born, and that, as a gentleman, honor must be his guiding star through life. It was from her lips he learned his Bible, from her teaching he drank in the sincere belief in revealed religion which he never lost. It was she who imbued her great son with an ineradicable belief in the efficacy of prayer, and in the reality of God's interposition in the every-day affairs of the true believer. No son ever returned a mother's love with more heartfelt intensity. She was his idol, and he worshipped her with the deep-seated, inborn love which is known

General Lee.

only to the son in whom filial affection is strengthened by respect and personal admiration for the woman who bore him. He was her all in all, or, as she described it, he was both son and daughter to her. He watched over her in weary hours of pain, and served her with all that soft tenderness which was such a marked trait in the character of this great, stern leader of men.

He seemed to have been throughout his boyhood and early youth perfect in disposition, in bearing, and in conduct—a model of all that was noble, honorable, and manly. Of the early life of very few great men can this be said. Many who have left behind them greatest reputations for usefulness, in whom middle age was a model of

General Lee.

virtue and perhaps of noble self-denial, began their career in a whirlwind of wild excess. Often, again, we find that, like Nero, the virtuous youth develops into the middle-aged fiend, who leaves behind him a name to be execrated for all time. It would be difficult to find in history a great man, be he soldier or statesman, with a character so irreproachable throughout his whole life as that which in boyhood, youth, manhood, and to his death, distinguished Robert Lee from all contemporaries.

He entered the military academy of West Point at the age of eighteen, where he worked hard, became adjutant of the cadet corps, and finally graduated at the head of his class. There he mastered the theory of

General Lee.

war, and studied the campaigns of the great masters in that most ancient of sciences. Whatever he did, even as a boy, he did thoroughly with order and method. Even at this early age he was the model Christian gentleman in thought, word and deed. Careful and exact in the obedience he rendered his superiors, but remarkable for that dignity of deportment which all through his career struck strangers with admiring respect.

He left West Point when twenty-two, having gained its highest honors, and at once obtained a commission in the engineers. Two years afterwards he married the granddaughter and heiress of Mrs. Custis, whose second husband had been General Washington, but by

General Lee.

whom she left no children. It was a great match for a poor subaltern officer, as his wife was heiress to a very extensive property and to a large number of slaves. She was clever, very well educated, and a general favorite: he was handsome, tall, well made, with a graceful figure, and a good rider: his manners were at once easy and captivating. These young people had long known one another, and each was the other's first love. She brought with her as part of her fortune General Washington's beautiful property of Arlington, situated on the picturesque wooded heights that overhang the Potomac River, opposite the Capitol to which the great Washington had given his name. In talking to me of the

General Lee.

Northern troops, whose conduct in Virginia was then denounced by every local paper, no bitter expression passed his lips, but tears filled his eyes as he referred to the destruction of his place that had been the cherished home of the father of the United States. He could forgive their cutting down his trees, their wanton conversion of his pleasure grounds into a grave-yard; but he never could forget their reckless plunder of all the camp equipment and other relics of General Washington that Arlington House contained.

Robert Lee first saw active service during the American War with Mexico in 1846, where he was wounded, and evinced a remarkable talent for war that brought himself

General Lee.

prominently into notice. He was afterwards engaged in operations against hostile Indians, and obtained the reputation in his army of being an able officer of great promise. General Scott, then the general of greatest repute in the United States, was especially attracted by the zeal and soldierly instinct of the young captain of engineers, and frequently employed him on distant expeditions that required cool nerve, confidence and plenty of common sense. It is a curious fact that throughout the Mexican War, General Scott, in his despatches and reports, made frequent mention of three officers—Lee, Beauregard and McClellan—whose names became household words in America afterwards, dur-

General Lee.

ing the great Southern struggle for independence. General Scott had the highest opinion of Lee's military genius, and did not hesitate to ascribe much of his success in Mexico as due to Lee's "skill, valour, and undaunted energy." Indeed subsequently, when the day came that these two men should part, each to take a different side in the horrible contest before them, General Scott is said to have urged Mr. Lincoln's Government to secure Lee at any price, alleging he "would be worth fifty thousand men to them." His valuable services were duly recognized at Washington by more than one step of brevet promotion: he obtained the rank of Colonel and was given command of a cavalry regiment shortly afterwards.

General Lee.

I must now pass to the most important epoch of his life, when the Southern States left the Union and set up a government of their own. Mr. Lincoln was in 1860 elected President of the United States in the Abolitionist interest. Both parties were so angry that thoughtful men began to see war alone could end this bitter dispute. Shipwreck was before the vessel of state, which George Washington had built and guided with so much care during his long and hard-fought contest. Civil war stared the American citizen in the face, and Lee's heart was well nigh broken at the prospect. Early in 1861 the seven Cotton States passed acts declaring their withdrawal from the Union, and their establish-

General Lee.

ment of an independent republic, under the title of "The Confederate States of America." This declaration was in reality a revolution: war alone could ever bring all the States together.

Lee viewed this Secession with horror. Until the month of April, when Virginia, his own dearly-cherished State, joined the Confederacy, he clung fondly to the hope that the gulf which separated the North from the South might yet be bridged over. He believed the dissolution of the Union to be a dire calamity not only for his own country, but for civilization and all mankind. "Still," he said, "a Union that can only be maintained by swords and bayonets, and in which strife and civil war are to take the

General Lee.

place of brotherly love and kindness, has no charm for me." In common with all Southerners he firmly believed that each of the old States had a legal and indisputable right by its individual constitution, and by its act of union, to leave at will the great Union into which it had separately entered as a sovereign State. This was with him an article of faith of which he was as sure as of any Divine truths he found in the Bible. This fact must be kept always in mind by those who would rightly understand his character, or the course he pursued in 1861. He loved the Union for which his father and family in the previous century had fought so hard and done so much. But he loved his own State still more. She

General Lee.

was the Sovereign to whom in the first place he owed allegiance, and whose orders, as expressed through her legally-constituted government, he was, he felt, bound in law, in honor, and in love, to obey without doubt or hesitation. This belief was the mainspring that kept the Southern Confederacy going, as it was also the corner-stone of its constitution.

In April, 1861, at Fort Sumter, Charleston Harbor, the first shot was fired in a war that was only ended in April, 1865, by the surrender of General Lee's army at Appomatox Court House in Virginia. In duration it is the longest war waged since the great Napoleon's power was finally crushed at Waterloo. As the heroic struggle of a

General Lee.

small population that was cut off from all outside help against a great, populous and very rich Republic, with every market in the world open to it, and to whom all Europe was a recruiting ground, this Secession War stands out prominently in the history of the world. When the vast numbers of men put into the field by the Northern States, and the scale upon which their operations were carried on, are duly considered, it must be regarded as a war fully equal in magnitude to the successful invasion of France by Germany in 1870. If the mind be allowed to speculate on the course that events will take in centuries to come, as they flow surely on with unvarying swiftness to the ocean of the unknown future,

General Lee.

the influence which the result of this Confederate War is bound to exercise upon man's future history will seem very great. Think of what a power the re-United States will be in another century! Of what it will be in the twenty-first century of the Christian era! If, as many believe, China is destined to absorb all Asia and then to overrun Europe, may it not be in the possible future that Armageddon, the final contest between heathendom and Christianity, may be fought out between China and North America? Had Secession been victorious, it is tolerably certain that the United States would have broken up still further, and instead of the present magnificent and English-speaking empire, we should now

General Lee.

see in its place a number of small powers with separate interests.

Most certainly it was the existence of slavery in the South that gave rise to the bitter antagonism of feeling which led to secession. But it was not to secure emancipation that the North took up arms, although during the progress of the war Mr. Lincoln proclaimed it, for the purpose of striking his enemy a serious blow. Lee hated slavery, but, as he explained to me, he thought it wicked to give freedom suddenly to some millions of people who were incapable of using it with profit to themselves or the State. He assured me he had long intended to gradually give his slaves their liberty. He believed the institution to be a moral and political

General Lee.

evil, and more hurtful to the white than to the black man. He had a strong affection for the negro, but he deprecated any sudden or violent interference on the part of the State between master and slave. Nothing would have induced him to fight for the continuance of slavery: indeed he declared that had he owned every slave in the South, he would willingly give them all up if by so doing he could preserve the Union. He was opposed to secession, and to prevent it he would willingly sacrifice everything except honor and duty, which forbade him to desert his State. When in April, 1861, she formally and by an act of her Legislature left the Union, he resigned his commission in the United States army with the

General Lee.

intention of retiring into private life. He endeavored to choose what was right. Every personal interest bid him throw in his lot with the Union. His property lay so close to Washington that it was certain to be destroyed and swept of every slave, as belonging to a rebel. But the die was cast: he forsook everything for principle and the stern duty it entailed. Then came that final temptation which opened out before him a vista of power and importance greater than that which any man since Washington had held in America. General Long's book proves beyond all further doubt that he was offered the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Federal army. General Scott, his great

General Lee.

friend and leader, whom he loved and respected, then commanding that army, used all his influence to persuade him to throw in his lot with the North, but to no purpose. Nothing would induce him to have any part in the invasion of his own State, much as he abhorred the war into which he felt she was rushing. His love of country, his unselfish patriotism, caused him to relinquish home, fortune, a certain future, in fact everything for her sake.

He was not, however, to remain a spectator of the coming conflict: he was too well known to his countrymen in Virginia as the officer in whom the Federal army had most confidence. The State of Virginia appointed him Major-Gen-

General Lee.

eral and Commander-in-Chief of all her military forces. In open and crowded convention he formally accepted this position, saying, with all that dignity and grace of manner which distinguished him, that he did so "trusting in Almighty God, an approving conscience, and the aid of my fellow citizens." The scene was most impressive: there were present all the leading men of Virginia, and representatives of all the first families in a State where great store was attached to gentle birth, and where society was very exclusive. General Lee's presence commanded respect, even from strangers, by a calm self-possessed dignity, the like of which I have never seen in other men. Naturally of strong passions, he kept them

General Lee.

under perfect control by that iron and determined will, of which his expression and his face gave evidence. As this tall, handsome soldier stood before his countrymen, he was the picture of the ideal patriot, unconscious and self-possessed in his strength: he indulged in no theatrical display of feeling: there was in his face and about him that placid resolve which bespoke great confidence in self, and which in his case—one knows not how—quickly communicated its magnetic influence to others. He was then just fifty-four years old, the age of Marlborough when he destroyed the French army at Blenheim: in many ways and on many points these two great men much resembled each other. Both were of a

General Lee.

dignified and commanding exterior, eminently handsome, with a figure tall, graceful and erect, whilst a muscular, square-built frame bespoke great activity of body. The charm of manner, which I have mentioned as very winning in Lee, was possessed in the very highest degree by Marlborough. Both, at the outset of their great careers of victory, were regarded as essentially national commanders. Both had married young, and were faithful husbands and devoted fathers. Both had in all their campaigns the same belief in an ever-watchful Providence, in whose help they trusted implicitly, and for whose interposition they prayed at all times. They were gifted with the same military instinct, the same genius for war.

General Lee.

The power of fascinating those with whom they were associated, the spell which they cast over their soldiers, who believed almost superstitiously in their certainty of victory, their contempt of danger, their daring courage, constitute a parallel that is difficult to equal between any other two great men of modern times.

From the first Lee anticipated a long and bloody struggle, although from the bombastic oratory of self-elected politicians and patriots the people were led to believe that the whole business would be settled in a few weeks. This folly led to a serious evil, namely, the enlistment of soldiers for only ninety days. Lee, who understood war, pleaded in favor of the term being for the

General Lee.

end of the war, but he pleaded in vain. To add to his military difficulties, the politicians insisted upon the officers being elected by their men. This was a point which, in describing to me the constitution of his army, Lee most deplored. When war bursts upon a country unused to the ordeal, and therefore unskilled in preparing for it, the frothy babbling of politicians too often forces the nation into silly measures to its serious injury during the ensuing operations. That no great military success can be achieved quickly by an improvised army is a lesson that of all others is made most clear by the narrative of this war on both sides. All through its earlier phases, the press, both Northern and Southern, called

General Lee.

loudly, and oftentimes angrily, for quick results. It is this impatience of the people, which the press is able to emphasize so strongly, that drives many weak generals into immature action. Lee, as well as others at this time, had to submit to the sneers which foolish men circulated widely in the daily newspapers. It is quite certain that under the existing condition of things no Fabius would be tolerated and that the far-seeing military policy which triumphed at Torre Vedras would not be submitted to by the English public of to-day. Lee was not, however, a man whom any amount of irresponsible writing could force beyond the pace he knew to be most conducive to ultimate success.

General Lee.

The formation of an army with the means alone at his disposal was a colossal task. Everything had to be created by this extraordinary man. The South was an agricultural, not a manufacturing, country, and the resources of foreign lands were denied it by the blockade of its ports maintained by the fleet of the United States. Lee was a thorough man of business, quick in decision, yet methodical in all he did. He knew what he wanted. He knew what an army should be, and how it should be organized, both in a purely military as well as an administrative sense. In about two months he had created a little army of fifty thousand men, animated by a lofty patriotism and courage that made them unconquerable by any

General Lee.

similarly constituted army. In another month, this army at Bull's Run gained a complete victory over the Northern invaders, who were driven back across the Potomac like herds of frightened sheep. As the Federals ran, they threw away their arms and everything, guns, tents, wagons, etc., were abandoned to the victors. The arms, ammunition and equipment then taken were real godsend to those engaged in the organization of the Southern armies. Thenceforward a battle to the Confederates meant a new supply of everything an army required. It may be truthfully said, that practically the Government at Washington had to provide and pay for the arms and equipment of its enemies as well as for all that its

General Lee.

own enormous armies required. The day I presented myself in General Lee's camp, as I stood at the door of his tent awaiting admission, I was amused to find it stamped as belonging to a colonel of a New Jersey regiment. I remarked upon this to General Lee, who laughingly said, "Yes, I think you will find that all our tents, guns, and even the men's pouches are similiarly marked as having belonged to the United States army." Some time afterwards, when General Pope and his large invading army had been sent back flying across the Maryland frontier, I overheard this conversation between two Confederate soldiers: "Have you heard the news? Lee has resigned!" "Good G—!" was the reply, "What for?"

General Lee.

“He has resigned because he says he cannot feed and supply his army any longer, now that his commissary, General Pope, has been removed.” Mr. Lincoln had just dismissed General Pope, replacing him by General McClellan.

The Confederates did not follow up their victory at Bull's Run. A rapid and daring advance would have given them possession of Washington, their enemy's capitol. Political considerations at Richmond were allowed to outweigh the very evident military expediency of reaping a solid advantage from this their first great success. Often afterwards, when this attempt to allay the angry feelings of the North against the Act of Secession had entirely failed, was this action of

General Lee.

their political rulers lamented by the Confederate commanders.

In this article to attempt even a sketch of the subsequent military operations is not to be thought of. Both sides fought well, and both have such reason to be proud of their achievements that they can now afford to hear the professional criticisms of their English friends in the same spirit that we Britishers have learned to read of the many defeats inflicted upon our arms by General Washington.

What most strikes the regular soldier in these campaigns of General Lee is the inefficient manner in which both he and his opponents were often served by their subordinate commanders, and how badly the staff and outpost work gener-

General Lee.

ally was performed on both sides. It is most difficult to move with any effective precision young armies constituted as these were during this war.

The direction and movement of large bodies of newly-raised troops, even when victorious, is never easy, is often impossible. Over and over again was the South apparently "within a stone's throw of independence," as it has been many times remarked, when, from want of a thoroughly good staff to organize pursuit, the occasion was lost, and the enemy allowed to escape. Lee's combinations to secure victory were the conceptions of a truly great strategist, and, when they had been effected, his tactics were also almost always everything

General Lee.

that could be desired up to the moment of victory, but there his action seemed to stop abruptly. Was ever an army so hopelessly at the mercy of another as that of McClellan when he began his retreat to Harrison's Landing after the seven days' fighting round Richmond? What commander could wish to have his foe in a "tighter place" than Burnside was in after his disastrous attack upon Lee at Fredericksburg? Yet in both instances the Northern commanders got safely away, and other similiar instances could be mentioned. The critical military student of this war who knows the power which regular troops, well-officered and well-directed by a thoroughly efficient staff, placed in the hands

General Lee.

of an able general, and who has acquired an intimate and complete knowledge of what these two contending American armies were really like, will, I think, agree that from first to last the co-operation of even one army corps of regular troops would have given complete victory to whichever side it fought on. I felt this when I visited the South, and during the progress of the war I heard the same opinion expressed by many others who had inspected the contending armies. I say this with no wish to detract in any way from the courage or other fighting qualities of the troops engaged. I yield to none in my admiration of their warlike achievements; but I cannot blind myself to the hyperbole of writers

General Lee.

who refer to these armies as the finest that have ever existed.

Those who know how difficult it is to supply our own militia and volunteer forces with efficient officers can appreciate what difficulties General Lee had to overcome in the formation of the army he so often led to victory. He had about him able assistants, who, like himself, had received an excellent military education at West Point. To the experienced soldier it is no matter of surprise, but to the general reader it will be of interest to know that, on either side in this war, almost every general whose name will be remembered in the future had been educated at that military school, and had been trained in the old regular army of

General Lee.

the United States. In talking to me of all the Federal generals, Lee mentioned McClellan with most respect and regard. He spoke bitterly of none—a remarkable fact, as at that time men on both sides were wont to heap the most violent terms of abuse upon their respective enemies. He thus reproved a clergyman who had spoken in his sermon very bitterly of their enemies: “I have fought against the people of the North because I believed they were seeking to wrest from the South her dearest rights; but I have never cherished towards them bitter or vindictive feelings, and I have never seen the day when I did not pray for them.” I asked him how many men he had at the battle of Antietam, from which he

General Lee.

had then recently returned. He said he had never had, during that whole day, more than about thirty thousand men in line, although he had behind him a small army of tired troops and of shoeless stragglers who never came up during the battle. He estimated McClellan's army at about one hundred thousand men. A friend of mine, who at that same time was at the Federal headquarters, there made similar inquiries. General McClellan's reply corroborated the correctness of Lee's estimate of the Federal numbers at Antietam, but he said he thought the Confederate army was a little stronger than that under his command. I mention this because both these generals were most truthful men, and what-

General Lee.

ever they stated can be implicitly relied on. I also refer to it because the usual proportion throughout the war between the contending sides in each action ranged from about twice to three times more Federals than there were Confederates engaged. With reference to the relative numbers employed on both sides, the following amusing story was told to me at the time: A deputation from some of the New England states had attended at the White House, and laid their business before the President. As they were leaving Mr. Lincoln's room one of the delegates turned round and said: "Mr. President, I should very much like to know what you reckon to be the number of rebels in arms against us." Mr.

General Lee.

Lincoln, without a moment's hesitation, replied: "Sir, I have the best possible reason for knowing the number to be one million of men, for whenever one of our generals engages a rebel army he reports that he has encountered a force twice his strength: now I know we have half a million of soldiers in the field, so I am bound to believe the rebels have twice that number."

As a student of war I would fain linger over the interesting lessons to be learned from Lee's campaigns: of the same race as both belligerents, I could with the utmost pleasure dwell upon the many brilliant feats of arms on both sides; but I cannot do so here.

The end came at last, when the

General Lee.

well-supplied North, rich enough to pay recruits, no matter where they came from, a bounty of over five hundred dollars a head, triumphed over an exhausted South, hemmed in on all sides, and even cut off from all communication with the outside world. The desperate, though drawn, battle of Gettysburgh was the death-knell of Southern independence; and General Sherman's splendid but almost unopposed march to the sea showed the world that all further resistance on the part of the Confederate States could only be a profitless waste of blood. In the thirty-five days of fighting near Richmond which ended the war of 1865, General Grant's army numbered one hundred and ninety

General Lee.

thousand, that of Lee fifty-one thousand men. Every man lost by the former was easily replaced, but an exhausted South could find no more soldiers. "The right of self-government," which Washington won, and for which Lee fought, was no longer to be a watchword to stir men's blood in the United States. The South was humbled and beaten by its own flesh and blood in the North, and it is difficult to know which to admire most, the good sense with which the result was accepted in the so-called Confederate States, or the wise magnanimity displayed by the victors. The wounds are now healed on both sides: Northerners and Southerners are now once more a united people, with a future before them to which

General Lee.

no other nation can aspire. If the English-speaking people of the earth cannot all acknowledge the same Sovereign, they can, and I am sure they will, at least combine to work in the interests of truth and peace, for the good of mankind. The wise men on both sides of the Atlantic will take care to chase away all passing clouds that may at any time throw even a shadow of dispute or discord between the two great families into which our race is divided.

Like all men, Lee had his faults: like all the greatest of generals, he sometimes made mistakes. His nature shrank with such horror from the dread of wounding the feelings of others, that upon occasions he left men in positions of

General Lee.

responsibility to which their abilities were not equal. This softness of heart, amiable as that quality may be, amounted to a crime in the man intrusted with the direction of public affairs at critical moments. Lee's devotion to duty and great respect for obedience seem at times to have made him too subservient to those charged with the civil government of his country. He carried out too literally the orders of those whom the Confederate Constitution made his superiors, although he must have known them to be utterly ignorant of the science of war. He appears to have forgotten that he was the great Revolutionary Chief engaged in a great revolutionary war: that he was no mere leader in a political

General Lee.

struggle of parties carried on within the lines of an old, well-established form of government. It was very clear to many at the time, as it will be commonly acknowledged now, that the South could only hope to win under the rule of a military dictator. If General Washington had had a Mr. Davis over him, could he have accomplished what he did? It will, I am sure, be news to many that General Lee was given the command over all the Confederate armies a month or two only before the final collapse; and that the military policy of the South was all throughout the war dictated by Mr. Davis as President of the Confederate States! Lee had no power to reward soldiers or to promote officers. It was Mr. Davis

General Lee.

who selected the men to command divisions and armies. Is it to be supposed that Cromwell, King William the Third, Washington, or Napoleon could have succeeded in the revolutions with which their names are identified, had they submitted to the will and authority of a politician as Lee did to Mr. Davis?

Lee was opposed to the final defence of Richmond that was urged upon him for political, not military reasons. It was a great strategic error. General Grant's large army of men was easily fed, and its daily losses easily recruited from a near base; whereas if it had been drawn far into the interior after the little army with which Lee endeavored to protect Richmond, its fighting strength would have

General Lee.

been largely reduced by the detachments required to guard a long line of communications through a hostile country. It is profitless, however, to speculate upon what might have been, and the military student must take these campaigns as they were carried out. No fair estimate of Lee as a general can be made by a simple comparison of what he achieved with that which Napoleon, Wellington, or Von Moltke accomplished, unless due allowance is made for the difference in the nature of the American armies, and of the armies commanded and encountered by those great leaders. They were at the head of perfectly organized, thoroughly trained, and well-disciplined troops; whilst Lee's soldiers, though gallant and daring to

General Lee.

a fault, lacked the military cohesion and efficiency, the trained company leaders, and the educated staff which are only to be found in a regular army of long standing. A trial heat between two jockeys mounted on untrained horses may be interesting, but no one would ever quote the performance as an instance of great racing speed.

Who shall ever fathom the depth of Lee's anguish when the bitter end came, and when, beaten down by sheer force of numbers, and by absolutely nothing else, he found himself obliged to surrender! The handful of starving men remaining with him laid down their arms, and the proud Confederacy ceased to be. Surely the crushing, maddening anguish of awful sorrow is only

General Lee.

known to the leader who has so failed to accomplish some lofty, some noble aim for which he has long striven with might and main, with heart and soul—in the interests of king or of country. A smiling face, a cheerful manner, may conceal the sore place from the eyes, possibly even from the knowledge of his friends; but there is no healing for such a wound, which eats into the very heart of him who has once received it.

General Lee survived the destruction of the Confederacy for five years, when, at the age of sixty-three, and surrounded by his family, life ebbed slowly from him. Where else in history is a great man to be found whose whole life was once such blameless record of duty nobly

General Lee.

done? It was consistent in all its parts, complete in all its relations. The most perfect gentleman of a State long celebrated for its chivalry, he was just, gentle and generous, and child-like in the simplicity of his character. Never elated with success, he bore reverses, and at last, complete overthrow, with dignified resignation. Throughout this long and cruel struggle his was all the responsibility, but not the power that should have accompanied it.

The fierce light which beats upon the throne is as that of a rushlight in comparison with the electric glare which our newspapers now focus upon the public man in Lee's position. His character has been subjected to that ordeal, and who

General Lee.

can point to any spot upon it? His clear, sound judgment, personal courage, untiring activity, genius for war, and absolute devotion to his State mark him out as a public man, as a patriot to be forever remembered by all Americans. His amiability of disposition, deep sympathy with those in pain or sorrow, his love for children, nice sense of personal honor and genial courtesy endeared him to all his friends. I shall never forget his sweet winning smile, nor his clear, honest eyes that seemed to look into your heart whilst they searched your brain. I have met many of the great men of my time, but Lee alone impressed me with the feeling that I was in the presence of a man who was cast in a grander mould, and made of

General Lee.

different and of finer metal than all other men. He is stamped upon my memory as a being apart and superior to all others in every way: a man with whom none I ever knew, a very few of whom I have read, are worthy to be classed. I have met but two men who realize my ideas of what a true hero should be: my friend Charles Gordon was one, General Lee was the other.

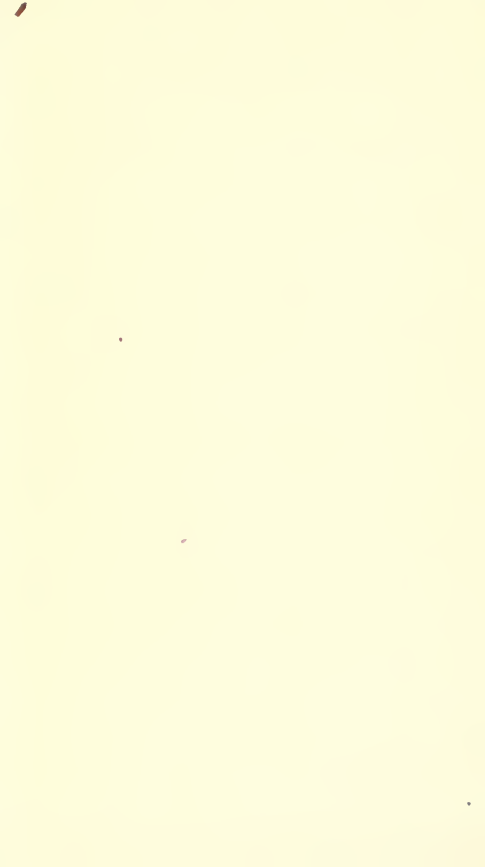
The following lines seem written for him:

“ Who is the honest man ?
He who doth still and strongly good pur-
sue,
To God, his country and himself most
true ;
Who when he comes to deal
With sick folk, women, those whom pas-
sions sway,
Allows for this, and keeps his constant
way.”

General Lee.

When all the angry feelings roused by Secession are buried with those which existed when the Declaration of Independence was written, when Americans can review the history of their last great rebellion with calm impartiality, I believe all will admit that General Lee towered far above all men on either side in that struggle: I believe he will be regarded not only as the most prominent figure of the Confederacy, but as the great American of the nineteenth century, whose statue is well worthy to stand on an equal pedestal with that of Washington, and whose memory is equally worthy to be enshrined in the hearts of all his countrymen.

PRESS OF
CHARLES MANN PRINTING COMPANY
ROCHESTER, N. Y.





THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS
WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN
THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY
WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH
DAY AND TO \$1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY
OVERDUE.

FEB 14 1944

ICLF (N)
30 NOV '58 GC

JAN 4 1944

REC'D LD

APR 16 1945

NOV 16 1945

LIBRARY

284819

t E 467

. L 4 W 7

